

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DOTE-00 AGR-05 AGRE-00 EB-07 ARAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7187

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BOGOTA 9101

DEPARTMENT PASS TRANSPORTATION AND AGRICULTURE

DEPARTMENT FOR ARA/ECP MAYFIELD

PANAMA FOR FHWA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, CO

SUBJECT: US-GOC CONSULTATIONS ON AFTOSA AND DARIEN GAP HIGHWAY

REF: STATE 219106

1. GOC ATTITUDES TOWARDS AFTOSA AND HIGHWAY PROJECTS REMAIN ABOUT THE SAME AS BEFORE, WITH PROGRAMS HAVING HIGHER PRIORITY IN THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS THAN IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE/ICA.

2. FACED WITH COURT INJUNCTION LEADING TO SUSPENSION OF USG COOPERATION, MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS DECIDED TO CONTINUE THE WORK ON ITS OWN AS LONG AS IT COULD. ONE PROJECT (PAID IN PESOS) WAS CONTINUED THROUGH THE INJUNCTION PERIOD. THE OTHER, PARTLY PAID IN DOLLARS, WAS CONTINUED INITIALLY BUT THEN SUSPENDED DUE TO LACK OF DOLLAR CONTRIBUTION. MOREOVER, DARIEN GAP HIGHWAY UNIT HAS BEEN OFFICIALLY INCORPORATED INTO THE MINISTRY (DECREE 154 OF JANUARY 27, 1976) AND STATUS OF UNIT'S PERSONNEL HAS BEEN CHANGED FROM CON-

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TRACT TO PERMANENT.

3. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE/ICA REMAIN COMMITTED TO PROJECT BUT, AS IN THE PAST, PROBLEMS ARE FINANCING AND ADMINISTRATION. JOSUE FRANCO MENDOZA, NEW GENERAL MANAGER OF ICA, HAS REPLACED ALL SUBMANAGERS AND HAS ISSUED A STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT EMPHASIS WOULD BE PLACED ON ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES AND DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY. HOWEVER, TO DATE THERE HAVE BEEN NI EVIDENT CHANGES IN OPERATING PROCEDURES. AS SHOWN BY LATEST USDA AUDIT OF ICA/INDERENA ADMINISTRATION OF PROGRAM, PERSONNEL IN FIELD ARE SOLEY COMMITTED TO PROJECTBUT ARE HAMPERED IN THEIR WORK BY ADMINISTRATIVE INEFFICIENCY.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT US APPROACH SHOULD BE TO REVIEVEW IN DETAIL ADMINISTRATIVE SHORTCOMINGS OF AFTOSA PROJECT AND TO PRESS FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF JOINT MEMORANDUM AGREED TO BY CG LAST DECEMBER. AT THE SAME TIME, WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO RECOGNIZE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE AND TO DEFINE AS PRECISELY AS POSSIBLE WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE.

5. AS NOTED IN REFTEL, VICE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (VELEZ)AND GENERAL MANGER OF ICA ARE NEW IN THEIR JOBS AND ARE STILL ON THE LEARNING CURVE. WE BELIEVE THEIR LACK OF EXPERIENCE WILL LEAD THEM TO WANT TO MAINTAIN THE EXISTING PARAMETERS OF THE AFTOSA PROGRAM AND NOT BREAK ANY NEW GROUND FOR THE TIME BEING.

SANCHEZ

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